

## Kennedy: Bush fails with plan to cut education grants

By Senator Edward M. Kennedy / Guest Columnist  
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The President's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2006 shortchanges education in numerous respects, and one of the worst of the proposals is to eliminate the grants for career and technical education.

The so-called Perkins Grants are named for Congressman Carl Perkins of Kentucky, who served in Congress from 1949 to 1984, chaired the House Committee on Education and Labor for 18 years, and proposed the landmark program that combined the best of the two disciplines in his jurisdiction.

For 20 years, these grants have given students a direct link between what they are studying and the jobs they hope to pursue. Seventy percent of the funds -- \$13 million for Massachusetts for Fiscal Year 2005 -- go to high schools and 30 percent go to adult programs. Some students learn the skills they need to pass state licensing exams or qualify for industry-recognized credentials. Others are enabled to continue their education in two or four year colleges, or compete for good jobs immediately in the workforce.

At Assabet Valley, the program has served the MetroWest region for 32 years, connecting more than 1,500 students a day to over 250 businesses. Ninety-eight percent of students are placed in jobs by the time they graduate. The federal aid has helped Assabet fund more than 20 programs and provide instruction in professional development and advanced technology to instructors and faculty.

Educators and businesses across the state know the value of the program. Graduates see its positive results in their paychecks in fields such as allied health, construction trades, information technology, and countless other enterprises. Career and technical education builds talent and self-confidence, and for many young men and women it is the reason they stay in school.

Eliminating a program that offers so much to so many is not school reform, and it's not acceptable. This is one federal program that works, and it does so by putting people to work in productive jobs and careers. This effective program deserves greater support, not less.

The United States Senate also knows the value of the program. Yesterday the Senate unanimously passed the Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2005, strengthening and addressing these initiatives that have become so important to the people of Massachusetts.

For your attempt to eliminate it, Mr. President, you get a failing grade.

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